DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 938 CS 005 748

AUTHOR Romatowski, Jane A.; Trepanier, Mary L.
TITLE Examining and Influencing the Home Reading Behaviors of Young Children.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Parent Role; Preschool Children; Preschool Education; *Reading Habits; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Research; Surveys

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted of parents of preschool children in a child development center to determine the current level of home reading behavior. Twenty-five parents completed the survey instrument, which consisted of questions concerning the number of available children's books in the home, the time spent reading with the child, and the quality or type of behaviors that accompanied or resulted from the shared reading time. The responses showed that (1) the parents placed a high value on making books available to their children, (2) they read to their children from four to seven times a week, (3) the mother was the major person with whom the reading was shared, (4) the child most often initiated the reading, and (5) reading at home encouraged oral language development, acquainted children with books and print, involved them in activities that extended the concepts encountered in books, and promoted good, social-emotional interaction among family members. Based on these findings, the staff of the child development center created a lending library designed to encourage children to take books home and share them with their families. An informal survey of the lending library's effectiveness indicated general parent approval. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED195938

Examining and Influencing the Home Reading Behaviors Of Young Children

Jane A. Romatowski, Associate Professor

Mary L. Trepanier, Assistant Professor

University of Michigan - Dearborn

Division of Education

4901 Evergreen

Dearborn, Michigan 48128

(313) 593-5090

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jane A. Romatowski

Mary L. Trepanier

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS005748

Running Head: Home Reading Behaviors

Examining and Influencing the Home Reading Behaviors of Young Children

A number of studies has shown that a family's reading behavior at home positively influences a child's success in reading at school (Durkin, 1976: Hillerich 1977). Aware of this phenomenon, we decided to survey the parents of the pre-schoolers at our child development center for the purpose of establishing the current level of home reading behavior. Such data would certainly be useful to our staff in curriculum planning but, more importantly, it would also provide insight for others concerned with the literacy skills of young children.

The subjects of the study were the 3-5 year old pre-schoolers enrolled in the campus child development center. The majority were children of university students on campus. A small number were from the surrounding community. The center staff is dedicated to providing as much opportunity as possible for language development and language expansion. Language-experience charts and stories are common and exposure to age-appropriate books of every genre a daily occurrence.

Home Reading Survey

However, it was the home reading behavior in which we were interested. Thus, we designed a survey to help us gather relevant information. The survey consisted of written responses to questions concerning the number of available children's books in the home, the time spent reading with the child, and the quality or type of behaviors that accompanied or resulted from the shared reading time. Of the 30 families surveyed, 25 families completed the questionnaire.

Since living in a print-oriented environment with readily available age-appropriate books is an important factor in the development of reading skills, several questions were asked exploring the availability of books at home suitable for young children. Of the 25 respondents, 84% reported having over 40 books available to children at home, with no one choosing less than 10 books. When asked to estimate the total books purchased by the family for the child, approximately half (47%) reported purchasing more than 50 books, while another 24% reported purchasing more than 100 books. All 25 respondents replied that their children had received books as gifts. Also, 80% reported using the public library as a source for providing books at home. Clearly, these findings suggest that the parents of these pre-schoolers place a high value on making books avialable to their children at home.

Although the availability of books is important, equally important is the availability of reading time and people for reading in the home. Therefore, our respondents were asked questions regarding the frequency of time spent reading, the time of day when reading often occurred, with whom the reading time was shared, and by whom the reading was initiated. The majority of families reported reading to their children between 4-7 times per week. Reading was most likely to occur at bedtime in 60% of the homes. Also in the same percentage of homes parents read to their child whenever the child requested.

In determining with whom reading time was shared, respondents were asked to assign the percentage of time spent reading to the child by the 1) mother, 2) father, 3) older children in the family, 4) others who reside in the home, or 5) others.

Insert Table 1 about here

As seen in Table 1 the mother was the major person with whom the reading was shared. All respondents identified the mother as participating in the reading activity. In mean percentages, mothers usurped 60% of the total home reading time. In contrast, fathers used 32% of the total time. It is interesting to note that in two cases fathers were credited with using as much as 80% of the total time in reading to their children. In addition, 75% of the respondents identified the father as an active participant. This finding reflects the increasing role fathers play today in the care of their children.

When asked to name the initiator of the reading time, respondents were given the choices of 1) child at the center, 2) other children in family, 3) mother, 4) father, and 5) others, and asked to identify the percentage of time reading was initiated by each of these. As seen in Table 2, the child or the mother generally initiat-

Insert Table 2 about here

ed the reading time. In 75% of the cases the child initiated the reading 50% of the time or more. Though mothers were identified as initiating reading in all homes, in all but one home, mothers initiated the reading less than 40% of the time. Though these results tend to support previous research, generally speaking, it is significant to highlight the high interest demonstrated by children in initiating reading time.

Finally, respondents were queried about the kinds of behaviors that accompanied or were a consequent of the reading time. Those surveyed were asked to check all of the behaviors that applied to their reading sessions. The percentage of families identifying certain behaviors occurring as a result of reading time, appears in Table 3. It is evident from this data, that reading at home encourages

---

Insert Table 3 about here

---

oral language development, further acquaints children with books and print, involves them in activities which extend the concepts encountered in the books, and promotes good, social-emotional interaction between family members. Thus, many of the behaviors which encourage the development of reading and language skills as well as behaviors which encourage the development of strong, positive family relationships, do exit in the homes of the children enrolled at the campus child development center.

Lending Library Project

Realizing the present level of home reading experiences of the children in the center, some decisions were made as to the role the center staff could assume in this enterprise. The following goals were agreed upon: 1) to expose children and their families to a broader range of quality children's literature, 2) to capitalize on the child as "initiator" of reading time by creating opportunities for the pre-schooler to take books of interest home from the center, 3) to increase the involvement of both parents, but especially the

father, in shared reading sessions and 4) to promote a closer partnership between the center and the home in the development of cognitive and social skills of the pre-schoolers.

One way of achieving these goals was to have the center staff implement a center lending library. The purpose of the center's lending library was to encourage a child who demonstrated interest in a book at the center to take the book home and share it with the family. Importantly, the child took the book home only if one of the parents agreed there was time to read the book with the child that day. This commitment by the parents seemed necessary if our goals were to be achieved.

The general procedures for the lending library began with the child having a positive experience with a particular book and demonstrating a sense of delight or interest in it. The teacher, aide, or student teacher, were instructed to be observant of such behavior and to suggest and encourage the child to take the book home. Secondly, if the child agreed to take the book home, then the teacher assisted the pre-schooler in signing the book out and putting a notice in the parent's mail pocket. When the parent (either mother or father) arrived to take the child home from the center, the parent was asked if there were time to read the book with the child that day or evening. If the parent had time to read, then the book was taken home. If not, then the book was reserved for another day. Parents were encouraged to identify a more appropriate day. Finally, the child with the help of the parent returned the book.

Informal measures of the lending library's effectiveness suggest some gains. In a follow-up survey, parents reacted positively to the

lending library and encouraged its continuation. There were requests to feature a "book of the month" and to provide book lists to complement curriculum themes. Parents felt that center books should be sent home with greater frequency. Parents reported that the lending library provided an opportunity to build a sense of responsibility inasmuch as children were committed to caring for and returning the book. The project also facilitated conversation at home not only about the book, but also, about experiences in the center. Because of this, the sense of partnership between child, parent and center was heightened. The survey information and the lending library project should be helpful to others who are also concerned with literacy skills of young children. Because the project itself uses available materials and is easily implemented, it can be directly applied in most centers and school settings. Parents and staff working together on a mutually acceptable project with such clear benefits to the children is rewarding for everyone concerned.

References

Durkin, D. Teaching Young Children to Read. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1976.

Hillerich, R. L. Reading Fundamentals for Preschool and Primary Children. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1977.

Table 1

Distribution of People Resources for Home Reading

Persons identified as reading to the child	Number of respondents identifying the person as participator	Mean percentage of time spent in reading
Mother	24	61%
Father	18	32%
Older children in family	9	28%
Others who reside in home (grandparents, aunts)	2	10%
Others (babysitters, relatives	4	21%

Table 2

Initiators of Home Reading Time

Person initiating reading time	Number of respondents identifying the person as initiator of reading time	Mean percentage of time identified person was the initiator
Child at center	20	54%
Mother	20	27%
Father	10	13%
Other children	8	31%
Others (baby-sitters, relatives)	2	10%

Table 3

The Occurrence of Behaviors Accompanying

Home Reading Time

Behaviors	Number of families identifying the behavior	Percentage of families identifying the behavior
Pre-schooler helping in the reading of the story	21	84%
More cuddling behavior	19	76%
Pretending to be character in the story	13	52%
Singing rhymes	9	36%
Doing a follow-up activity stemming from the story	6	24%
Playing physically with the preschooler	2	8%